risk of lung cancer in a person

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Libby asbestos

## **Advocates** oush Martz funding

KATHLEEN MCLAUGHUN Missoulien State Bureau

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HELENA - A \$2.75 million
court settlement from W R.
Grace and Co. dedicated to
health-care in Libby will only
scratch the surface of that
community's long-term needs,
advocates told Gov. Judy
Martz on Wednesday.
Members of the newly
created Asbestos Health Care
Project Inc., in a meeting with
Gov. Judy Martz, said they are
looking for state assistance in
creative ways of planning for
Libby's likely massive healthcare needs. The health-care
group was formed this month
largely to overse spending of
the \$2.75 million settlement
that followed a U.S.
Environmental Protection
Agency lawauit against W B.
Grace and Co. over asbestos
cleanup in Libby.
The town has been declared

Orace and Co., over asbestos, cleanup in Libby.
The town has been declared one of the nation's largest environmental disasters, with widespread asbestop poisoning of residents over decades from the Grace and Co's defunct

the Grace and Co.'s defunct'
verniculite mine.
"The folks there feel like
nobody's been held
accountable. They feel like
they shouldn't be the ones to
carry the ball here," Tracy
Velazquez, a Bozeman
consultant working with the
Libby group, told Martz.
The governor said she

The governor said she would commit to helping find other sources of funding for Libby's bealth-care needs, but warned there ian't much give in the state's own budget for such projects. Martz noted ongoing financial problems at the state Department of Public Health and Human Services, which included the start of a bring freeze this week to save money,

The governor also said she doubted the state could finnel tobacco trust fund money toward Libby and she said health officials have told her there's no direct link between asbestos related disease and smoking. Health officials consistently agree that smoking

See FUNDING, Page B2

exposed to asbestos, but there's Moving tobacco trust funds to Secretary Tommy Thompson to discuss that idea and others, and she offered her office staff to at the federal level, similar to the "black lung" compensation fund that pays coal miners disabled by U.S. Health and Human Services nelp pursue funding alternatives. their work: Martz said she'll call

disease is tobacco-related. no way to tell whether the

.ibby would be "a tough sell,"

creating a "white lung" program Instead, she and other state health officials voiced strong closer-than-known relationship recent press reports exposed potential bidding problems and a Montana contract offer after find money for Libby. Denny Miller McBee Assoc, rejected the lobbyists could have helped a contract with the state, saying recent decision of a Washington, D.C., lobbying firm to turn down

we'll have them working on,"

disabled by their work.

Montana lawyer, Mark Baker between Martz and the firm's

Martz also bemoaned The governor's office decided

for this year, rejecting five other firms who wanted the job. to cancel the bidding process on its Washington, D.C., lobbyist will hire a Capitol Hill lobbyist for the next budget cycle. However, Martz said, the state "This will be a key issue that

"We had some fine consultants that we lost," Said.

all agreed. Maggie Bullock, health policy administrator for the Department of Public Health and Human Services, said she be figuring just how big they are can use an anticipated \$1.3 will inquire whether Montana milition federal gram to look at and how much money is needed,

said Martz.
The first part of tackling
Libby's health-care problems will

compensation fund that pais continueres the "black lung" federal level, similar to of creating a "white lung" program at the support for the notion Martz wiced strong

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